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RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE  
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RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// IMMEDIATE  
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RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU//TCH// IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP:PDUSDP/ISA:EUR/ISA:NESA/DSCA//  
RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000331

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/22/2028  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [PTER](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: TURKEY/IRAQ SITREP 1: TURKEY LAUNCHES GROUND  
OPERATION INTO NORTHERN IRAQ

Classified By: A/DCM Kim DeBlauw for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

[11.](#) (S/NF) Summary: The Turkish General Staff (TGS) has publicly announced that Turkish forces have launched a ground operation into northern Iraq, which began at 1700 hours Zulu on February 21. Predator imagery has identified two columns of approximately 800 dismounted infantry six kilometers inside Iraqi territory. Prior to the ground operation, Turkish forces carried out extensive artillery and air strikes against PKK targets in the Turkey-Iraq border region on February 21. The TGS has denied press reports of a confrontation between Turkish special forces and Peshmerga in northern Iraq. The National Security Council met February 21 and declared that Turkey will conduct cross border operations as long as necessary. End Summary

Ground Operations Begin  
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[12.](#) (U) The TGS publicly announced the morning of February 22 that Turkish forces had crossed into northern Iraq beginning at 1700 hours Zulu on February 21. According to the TGS announcement, the target of the ground operation is the PKK/Kongra Gel terrorist organization. The announcement states that Turkish forces will observe the "necessary sensitivity" to ensure that civilians and local elements who do not commit any hostile act against Turkish forces are not affected by the operations.

Preparatory Strikes  
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[13.](#) (S) The Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) fired artillery at suspected PKK targets across the border into northern Iraq, in the area of Hakurk, Metina, Zap and Avi Shin, from 0730-0900 hours Zulu on February 21. This activity was followed by air strikes and reconnaissance by up to 34 F-16s and RF-4 aircraft in the Metina, Zap, Avi Shin, Hakurk and Gara regions of northern Iraq from approximately 1000 to 1300 hours Zulu. Another round of artillery strikes took place in the Metina, Zap and Avi Shin regions between 1330 and 1700 hours Zulu. The Ankara Coordination Directorate (ACD) received prior notification of these strikes from the TGS to allow for battlespace deconfliction.

Notification of Ground Operation  
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¶4. (S) Turkish authorities notified ACD at approximately 1100 hours Zulu that Turkey intended to conduct a cross-border operation with air, artillery, and ground elements, commencing at 1700 hours Zulu. Areas of operation were given as grid boxes within 15 kilometers of the Turkey-Iraq border. A termination time was not given although TGS officials indicated the maximum duration would be two weeks. Turkish officials requested battlespace deconfliction.

¶5. (S/NF) At this time, two columns of up to 800 dismounted infantry have been observed via Predator imagery to have advanced approximately six kilometers into the objective area. TGS has notified the ACD that they will conduct close air support and artillery fire in the objective area the morning of February 22. Predator has been deconflicted from these strikes and relevant U.S. authorities have been appropriately notified.

#### Press Reporting

¶6. (U) Turkish press coverage centered on the February 21 Turkish National Security Council meeting and reports of an alleged clash between Turkish special forces and Peshmerga in northern Iraq. A statement issued after the meeting stated clearly that the fight against terrorism, including cross-border operations, would continue as long necessary. It noted the NSC discussed a possible land operation, responses to increased PKK attacks in spring and enhancing cooperation with the U.S. Hurriyet daily reported the NSC statement emphasized the importance of GOT cooperation with Iraq in areas such as humanitarian assistance and energy, and the

ANKARA 00000331 002 OF 002

possibility of a visit by Iraqi President Talabani. Hurriyet daily surmised the unusual 45 minute one-on-one meeting between President Gul and PM Erdogan following the NSC meeting was to discuss a new military operation in northern Iraq.

¶7. (U) Following up on FM Babacan's recent comment that a ground operation remains an option, newspapers reported on an increase in military activities in Turkey's southeast. Noting Turkish aircraft overflow northern Iraqi sites as the NSC meeting began, media picked up press reports of clashes between Turkish troops and Peshmerga across the border, reports later denied by Kurdish officials as well as statement posted on the TGS website. Aksam daily labeled the developments a "war of nerves". A Vatan columnist predicted a ground operation would increase unrest in Turkey's southeast and help the PKK fuel tensions between Turks and Kurds. Hurriyet columnist Ferai Tinc argued the main reason for the GOT to suggest a possible land operation was to distract Turks from domestic developments.

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